

## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

## RECENT FICTION.

**OLD MARK LANGSTON:** A Tale of Duke's Creek. By RICHARD MALCOLM JOHNSTON. 16mo. pp. 338. Harper & Brothers.

**A LATTER-DAY SAINT:** Being the story of the Conversion of Ethel Jones, dictated by herself. 16mo. pp. 200. Harper & Brothers.

**ONLY AN INCIDENT:** By GRACE DENIO LITCHFIELD. 16mo. pp. 226. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

**SOME OTHER FOLKS:** By SARAH PRATT MCLEAN. 12mo. pp. 287. Cupples, Upham & Co.

**THE PAGANS:** By ARLO BATES. 16mo. pp. — Henry Holt & Co.

**TREASURE ISLAND:** By ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON. 16mo. pp. 292. Roberts Brothers.

Why Mr. Johnston should have called his story "Old Mark Langston" it is hard to see, for the gentle old man who bears that name has not been made a conspicuous figure therein. He provides, however, an element of sweetness and nobility which could not be spared, though his name be out of place upon the title-page. It is pleasant to know that Mark once lived indeed; that the author has drawn upon his imagination for his characters, but has painted—*and with delightful spirit and vividness—the portraits of people known to his youth.* That period has long passed, life in middle Georgia has greatly changed, and one cannot but be grateful to Mr. Johnston for these records of a quaint people—records such as will probably never be found elsewhere.

The plot of the story is so full of absurdities that on the principle that truth is stranger than fiction it may be considered as real as the characters. It is certainly ingenious; few novelists would have had the courage to conjure up the singular figure of a man who helps a young couple privately married, to run away, and after a decent interval, when both are dead, reappears as the widower of the bride, and holds possession for many years of her property.

Many minor improbabilities accompany the working out of the plot. But it is not as a story that Mr. Johnston's book is most interesting.

It is his vigorous drawing of character which gives it value. He does not merely say of his people that thus they talk and act and look; he has known how to make them move before us so that we see them in their habits as they lived. He does not analyze them, but so presents them, that his reader's imagination is stirred, and he finds a double pleasure in himself conducting the analyzing process. There is fascination in the romance which is acted before our eyes; there is dreary surfet in the microscopic exhibition of thought and motive in which the average modern novelist delights. There is nothing unnatural in Mr. Johnston's characters, though there is not a commando among them. Not the least delightful is Baldy Riddle, a whimsical grown-up boy, whose fantastic, generous and sensitive nature is indicated with an adroit hand. Mr. Riddle's artistic tastes make him an important member of the little Georgia community.

Baldy's musical circle, was however, "Billy in the Low Ground," "Goodin," "The Gusty Flirt," Jenny Wiggins, the Wool-winder," "Blankets and Fins," with several jigs, styled, some of them, "Step and Fetch it." "What you for?" "Go along offa' here," and others similar, comprised his sportive pieces. In the series, or as a style, the solo-melodies were limited almost entirely to the Sea-side Shores" and "The Walls of Jericho." He had not been known, except on very few occasions, to play in public, and his audiences—there were few—had no objection to his being a mere drummer. His exception to this concert was that he did not play with the bridge. The musician, it is probable, did not live who could anticipate him at this triumphant note, on the consummation of which he would take down his bow and smile complacently. There is a strain of youthful satire in the story which is not unpleasing, and if the conclusion is conventionally pathetic the pathos is not unreal. What is "only an incident" in the life of a proud and beautiful woman turns out to be the death-stroke of a lovable little lass who sees the affection for which she longs wasted upon her heedless friend. It is a simple and stereotyped theme, but Miss Litchfield has worked it out in a fashion which shows promise for the future.

It is not apparent—except that it be for commercial purposes—why the publishers of "Some Other Folks" announce the book upon its cover as "a novel." The longest story of the four which the volume contains is told in eight short chapters and in no sense a novel—is hardly, indeed, in construction a novella. As a whole the book is school-girlish and scarcely above the level of the weekly story papers. As a periodical literature the stories might serve a sufficiently pleasant purpose, but there is nothing which justifies their presentation as novels. The book is well written, and the publisher's claim that it has been told exists; and there he was transported. Had he felt so embarrassed as when called upon to succeed her in the evening entertainment? He would have pleaded that his E string was weak, and that he had no bow. He seemed ever to regard such colleagues not only as rivals but adversaries. His habit on finishing any piece, of whatever character, was to give it a sharp snap of the bridge. The musician, it is probable, did not live who could anticipate him at this triumphant note, on the consummation of which he would take down his bow and smile complacently. There is a strain of youthful satire in the story which is not unpleasing, and if the conclusion is conventionally pathetic the pathos is not unreal. What is "only an incident" in the life of a proud and beautiful woman turns out to be the death-stroke of a lovable little lass who sees the affection for which she longs wasted upon her heedless friend. It is a simple and stereotyped theme, but Miss Litchfield has worked it out in a fashion which shows promise for the future.

So far from objecting to such contests, he rather liked them, regarding them as friendly trials of skill, and he liked them the more because he always fared well that he would prevail. This made a point of advantage, and he would do it even if he had to jump over any number of bars. It had been his boast that he had won every competition, and he never—not even in his dreams—had he could beat "Frost." "Frost," he would say: "as soon as I made up my mind that I could play the fiddle, I made up my mind that I'd never be beaten in its transactions, and that I'd be proven and primary master of it."

Of all the things he had under his hat, Miss Woodbridge must be impressed by his periphrase. This gratified him intensely, the more so because of his own unbounded delight at hers. The Porter piano was the first he had ever seen, and even the crude performances of Eliza had pleased him greatly; but he was transported. Never had he felt so embarrassed as when called upon to succeed her in the evening entertainment. He would have pleaded that his E string was weak, and that he had no bow. He seemed ever to regard such colleagues not only as rivals but adversaries. His habit on finishing any piece, of whatever character, was to give it a sharp snap of the bridge. The musician, it is probable, did not live who could anticipate him at this triumphant note, on the consummation of which he would take down his bow and smile complacently. There is a strain of youthful satire in the story which is not unpleasing, and if the conclusion is conventionally pathetic the pathos is not unreal. What is "only an incident" in the life of a proud and beautiful woman turns out to be the death-stroke of a lovable little lass who sees the affection for which she longs wasted upon her heedless friend. It is a simple and stereotyped theme, but Miss Litchfield has worked it out in a fashion which shows promise for the future.

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